

## ORNITHOLOGICAL.

CONCERNING *GERGYGONE flavida* RAMSAY.—In the British Museum Catalogue of Birds, vol. 4, p. 330, Dr. Sharpe enters among the synonyms of *Gerygone personata* Gld, the *G. flavida* of Dr. Ramsay,\* and it is believed that the propriety of the identification has not hitherto been questioned. There are, however, good grounds for doubting it. Dr. Sharpe regards the bird described as *flavida* as a female, for to his entry of it he adds the feminine symbol in brackets. Doubtless he felt at liberty to do so, since Dr. Ramsay had omitted to state the sex of his type. That omission was, as it proved, unfortunate, but by no means remarkable, since, in the absence of a counterstatement, it is generally inferred that a bird described is or is believed to be a male. But in the present case we are not by the description itself left without evidence that the type is really a male bird, for it gives as one of the characters “a stripe on either side of the throat, from the base of the lower mandible to below the ear coverts, white”—“the moustachial streak” of Dr. Sharpe. This feature occurs also in the male of *G. personata*, but curiously enough no mention of it is made by Dr. Sharpe in his description of the female of that species, by means of which he identifies with it *G. flavida*. This shews that in *G. personata* at least the moustachial streak is a masculine character, and the fact would at least have justified the use of a “?” after the feminine symbol aforesaid. To endeavour to settle the question, permission to examine Dr. Ramsay’s type was solicited from the Authorities of the Australian Museum, and with great kindness granted by them. The label in the describer’s handwriting indicated a male in the usual way. There is no room left for any doubt about the correctness of the indication when we compare the type with other co-specific examples from the same locality. It becomes perfectly clear that the white moustache is a masculine ornament in this species also, and that it is not assumed until the bird is fully adult. Of such birds there is but one in a series of seven, its sex attested by the mode of crossing the legs, adopted by the collector, Mr. K. Broadbent, and from this example Dr. Ramsay might have drawn up his description in exactly the same terms as he used. If it were necessary to adduce any further reason for rescuing *G. flavida* from the limbo of synonymism, due weight might be given to the affirmation of the collector that the haunts of *G. flavida* are quite different from those of *G. personata*. The latter inhabits low dense scrubs at Cape York, the former he obtained only from the tops of lofty forest trees in the Herberton district. Before dismissing the type specimen, it may be useful to those who have to identify with it examples of the other sex or different ages to mention two characters not included in Dr. Ramsay’s description, but present in the species, an orbital ring

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\* Pro. Lin. Soc., New South Wales, v. 2, p. 537.

and a very pale, almost white, chin and upper throat. The whiteness of the throat is most decided in adult males, these have many feathers of the chin entirely white or nearly so. A few white feathers occur in most young males and females, but to judge from material at hand it is but seldom, even among females, that the throat can be said to be yellow. The ring round the eye, dusky and easily overlooked in the type, is invariably present, and in females appears to be whiter and better developed. The colour of the bill appears to vary with age from horn brown, more or less pale, to black. The female differs from the adult male in the absence of the moustache, little or no whiteness of the upper throat, and the paleness of the orbital ring.

AN APPARENTLY NEW SERICORNIS.—It can hardly be thought rash to anticipate that many additions to our list of known birds will be gradually made as the vast extent of territory in the west and north-west of the State, explored at present only by the squatter and prospector, is searched by the zoological collector. Of the indigenous products of these regions we know very little so far. Indeed, it would appear that it is not necessary to go nearly so far afield to make new acquaintances of the kind. Charleville, the terminus of our Southern Railway, seems on the map to be almost at our door, yet there are birds in its vicinity not found nearer to the coast, a tree creeper, for example, and the two now to be introduced as candidates for admission to our avifauna. Both belong to the peculiar group of small insectivorous tree birds, to which the trivial names of thornbills (*Acanthiza*) and scrubwrens (*Sericornis*) are given. The majority of the species of both genera and all those of *Acanthiza* have the tail ornamented with a dark cross band, which is most obvious when the bird raises the organ, and brings its lower surface into view, an act conducive to their recognition in their leafy haunts. The scrub wren under view appears to be easily distinguishable by its diminutive size and rufous undertail from those of its fellow species, which, like it, have the dark band on the tail.

#### DESCRIPTION OF SERICORNIS tyrannula n.s.

General colour of upper surface rufous brown, graduating from brown anteriorly to bright rufous posteriorly. Head and nape brown, uniform on the forehead. Wing rufescent brown, median coverts edged with rufous; greater coverts blackish brown, forming a dark rectangular blotch on the wing; primaries broadly edged with pale rufous, in certain lights with rufescent gray; mantle and scapulars rufescent brown, the rufous tint predominant on the lower back. Upper tail coverts, bright rufous; middle tail feathers rufous brown, the others dusky gray, permeated by the dark band of the under surface. Lores and cheeks subrufescent, the latter mottled with dark gray; ear coverts rufescent with pale

shaft streaks. Palpebral streak dark in front, rufous in centre, pale posteriorly. Chin, throat, upper breast and flanks, pale rufous, passing into dusky white on the lower breast and abdomen; vent dusky brown; under tail coverts bright rufous; tail with a black transverse band, occupying the third quarter from the base; thighs and under wing coverts pale rufous; bill, legs, and feet, dead straw colour. Total length, 85 mm., culmen imperfect, wing, 50; tail, 42; tarsus, 21. Tail rounded, four stiff bristles at the gape. Locality, Charleville. Collector, K. Broadbent.

There is but one example of this bird, and that of unknown sex. It is not at all unlikely that when it is better known, it will be referred to another genus.

#### DESCRIPTION OF ACANTHIZA modesta n.s.

Above, pale olive brown, mantle feathers with concealed paler shafts; rump pale yellowish brown, with a few white-tipped feathers; wing brown, coverts edged with ash grey, grey primaries with the same, but much more narrowly, bastard wing with dingy white; tail feathers ashy brown, with a broad blackish subterminal cross band and a broad whitish tip; forehead and lore uniform with head; eyelid dingy white and obscure; cheeks pale brown; ear coverts darker brown, both with pale shaft streaks; side of neck, shoulder, and all beneath pale buffy yellow, purer on the abdomen and under tail coverts, slightly tinged with rufous on the throat; thighs pale brown, its feathers edged with pale yellow; under wing coverts yellowish white; inner webs of quills with paler margins; bill and feet dark brown. Length, 85 mm; culmen, 7; tail, 40; wing, 48; tarsus, 19.

Female like the male, but with all the feathers of the rump broadly edged with pale yellow, and the head faintly lineated with paler shaft streaks. Habitat, Charleville.

The sexes are given on the authority of the collector, Mr. K. Broadbent, but it seems not improbable that they should be reversed. On the whole, perhaps, this bird resembles *A. lineata* more than any other, but altogether wants the distinctly striated throat, and all but a trace of the lineated head of that species.

#### DESCRIPTION OF ANCATHIZA katherina, A MOUNTAIN THORNBILL.

Above olive green, duller anteriorly, slightly rufescent posteriorly; wing brown, coverts and secondaries broadly edged with olive green, primaries narrowly with greenish gray, which towards the base and on the innermost primaries is rather rufescent; upper tail coverts rufous brown, lateral uropygial tufts almost or quite obsolete; middle tail feathers pale, rather rufescent-brown on the outer webs, laterals with a broad subterminal black cross band and a large dusky white tip, which, on the anterior half of its inner web, becomes white, thus forming a cuneiform white spot beyond the black cross bar; frontal feathers olive brown at base, with pale

tips, causing an inconspicuous scaly appearance; lores as the frontals; eyelid dusky white; cheeks and ear coverts mottled olive green and white, the latter predominant on the cheeks; chin and throat nearly white, narrowly striated with a few black streaks on the feathers; upper breast yellowish white, passing into dull greenish yellow on the lower breast, abdomen, and flanks; under tail coverts white, very slightly washed with yellow; thighs very pale brown; axillaries, under wing coverts and bastard wing as under tail coverts; under surface of quills with whitish edges on the inner web; iris yellow; bill black-brown; legs light brown. Length, 96 mm.; culmen, 7; wing, 52; tail, 48; tarsus, 14.5.

The female does not differ from the male in any notable respect. Habitat, Bellenden Ker Range, at a height of 4000 feet.

This species has the delicately streaked throat and non rufous forehead of *A. apicalis*, the dull rufous upper tail coverts of *pusilla*, and the pale yellow under surface of *diemensis*; wants the bold throat markings of *pusilla*, the brightly coloured upper tail coverts of *apicalis*, and the size and brown flanks of *diemensis*, and the white spot on the tail feathers is not possessed by any other species.

#### GERYGONE fusca.

In the Herberton district this species is represented by a race devoid of the white lore, and having the side of the neck light reddish brown instead of gray, but as these seem to be the only constant differences, it is advisable to wait for information about the habits, nidification, etc., of the birds before granting them higher rank.

#### AN UNDESCRIBED PACHYCEPHALA.

A rather dishevelled specimen of a female thickhead was among the zoological spoil obtained in June, 1889, by the scientific expedition to the Bellenden Ker Range at that time in progress. Though the skin appeared then as now to have been derived from an unknown bird, it was thought well to defer a description of it until further light was thrown upon the species by the appearance of the male. Unfortunately, it has been found impossible to take any step towards making the discovery, the Museum being deprived of later years of the means of sending a collector to the spot. As there still seems to be no immediate prospect of obtaining the significant sex, the writer is induced to give the following account of the female under the name of *Pachycephala mestoni*.

Upper surface dull olive green; base of the feathers blue-black on the forehead, passing insensibly into slate-blue on the hind head and all beyond, the dull yellowish olive-green of the broad margins of the feathers becoming more distinctly yellow on the upper tail coverts; tail brown, all its quills, except the outermost

on each side, fringed with olive green; wing dark brown, but shewing that colour in the centres only of the coverts and secondaries, which are also paler and tinged with rufous; primaries narrowly edged with grey; cheeks brown with many black hairs and at the gape rufous brown; ear coverts brown, with paler shaft streaks; chin and throat uniform dusky, passing into the pale rufous brown which forms an undefined zone across the upper breast; lower breast and abdomen pale cinnamon, changing into pale dull yellow on the under tail coverts and lowermost flank feathers; tail beneath slate-brown, with white shafts; thigh brown; under wing coverts brownish white, faintly edged with yellowish, quills beneath edged with silky white, which on the innermost primaries is tinged with fulvous; bill and feet, black. Length, 153 mm.; culmen, 14; wing, 88; tail, 78; tarsus, 23.

The bird was shot by Mr. A. Meston on one of the spurs of Mount Sophia, and carried for some time in his pocket, a circumstance which may be pleaded in extenuation of possible errors of description.

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